

Interview H0235: Surkhang Wangchen Gelek [tib. zur khang dbang chen dge legs], (USA, 1967) : Part No. 2 of 7

The interviewee was one of the most important Tibetan government officials in modern Tibetan history. He served as a Kashag or Cabinet Minister (Kalön) from 1943-1959. He discusses the events after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama including Lungshar's strategy and the fall of Künphel La.

At that time all [Sendregasum](#) representatives gathered together and as I told you yesterday, they made a written statement (tib. yige [yi ge]) saying that we need to know how the Dalai Lama died so please allow us to hold a Tsondu Assembly meeting. They also said that new representatives from [Sendregasum](#) have to attend the Assembly meeting.

When this statement came to the Kashag, the Kashag didn't want to hold this Assembly meeting because they were afraid the monks would be very powerful (tib. wangche [dbang byas]) and would cause a disturbance (tib. sangi singi [tib. zang ngi zing ngi]). They thought this might harm the Kashag, but they didn't dare to ignore it because there were many monks and [Sendregasum](#) was very powerful. So the Kashag accepted it and said that we will hold the Tsondu Assembly meeting.

Q

Did the representatives from [Sendregasum](#) come to the Kashag?

A

Yes, but according to the rules, they could not come inside the Kashag. However, the abbots could come inside. The representatives would report through the Kadrung and Kandrön. So they just went through the motions of following the rules, but while in the past the Kashag would not be afraid of the abbots, at this time since there were the special

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representatives, all the members of the Kashag were extremely afraid and said that we will hold the Tsondu Assembly.

Q

Before the Kashag decided this, did they hold any internal discussions with the Regent or the Silön?

A

No, they didn't. But right at that point in time, the Kashag asked the Silön about that, and he said that this is okay because the [situation] has become very chaotic. So it was decided to hold the Assembly meeting on the next day or the day after that. Then the Tsondu was held. When the Trungtsi were told to hold the Tsondu Assembly it was held in a place where it was never held in the past. It was held at the Secretariat (tib. gaà ['gag]) of the Dalai Lama in [Norbulinga](#). There wasn't any custom like that in the past.

Q

Where would you normally hold the Tsondu?

A

We would hold the Tsondu in the big hall called Shabtenkhang [tib. zhabs brtan khang]. The Tsondu was held on probably the 11th or the 12th.

Q

Who chose the place?

A

The Trungtsi chose it and asked the Kashag to allow them to hold the Tsondu at simchung gaà. It was said the Trungtsi did it, but [Lungshar](#) pushed the monks to do such work. Probably, it was [Lungshar](#) who had the idea of holding the [tsondu](#) at the simchung gaà.

Q

Were most of the Trungtsigye supporting [Lungshar](#)?

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A

No. Among the Trungtsi there wasn't even one person standing on Lungshar's side. Under them, the Drönyerchemmo Tendzin Chöden [tib. bstan 'dzin chos ldan] was standing on Lungshar's side and there were several [kudrak](#) standing on Lungshar's side. Most of the officials were [using English] neutral. There seems to be many people, but each people could use only his own strength and could not carry a heavy weight because [Lungshar](#) had bought the monks of [Sendregasum](#) and they were standing behind him. It was like [they were] bought, so the power had already come into Lungshar's hand. Therefore, all the people were afraid that if one didn't follow [Lungshar](#), there will be danger for oneself. So when [Lungshar](#) said something, everyone knew that Chamön [tib. byams smon] will be there and the people under the Sog Jiso [tib. sog spyi so] will be there. The Sog Jiso himself was in the background in Drepung. So all people were thinking that if we didn't follow [Lungshar](#), there will be danger, and so long as there is no danger for myself, I don't care (tib. khye mindu [khyad mi 'dug]).

Q

At that time, did the [Kalön](#) and the Silön know the trouble was caused by the people under [Lungshar](#)?

A

They knew a little bit. On the first day, they didn't know much and among the monks many were telling lies like saying that he [the Dalai Lama] might have been poisoned and probably he was [using English] murdered. They were saying all kinds of reckless things. So all the monks were agitated, but they didn't know at all the involvement of [Lungshar](#). Several people who were planning the activities knew. Do you understand? Like this, they held the [tsongdu](#) at the simchung gaà in [Norbulinga](#). On the first day of the Tsondu, they summoned Kujar but first they questioned the [Jigyab khempo](#).

Q

Altogether how many people were there in the Tsondu?

A

Probably there were 250 people.

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Q

Who was there?

A

It was said that there were 170 lay officials and 170 monk officials, but many had gone to work in the [dzong](#) (districts) so it was the lay officials and monk officials who were in Lhasa who attended the Assembly. So probably there might have been 100 lay officials and 100 monk officials as well as about 20 abbots and about 20 representatives of [Sendregasum](#). Altogether, they might have been 250-300 people.

Q

What was the difference between the Tsondu hragdu (Abbreviated Assembly) and the Tsondu gyendzom (Full Assembly)?

A

The Abbreviated Assembly was held at times when there was peace and calm. Its members were nominated from above and met along with the abbots of [Sendregasum](#). They would not make trouble and would do things correctly (tib. tenten tigtig [tan tan tig tig]). From among the government officials, there were the Trungtsigye and officials that the Kashag reported to the Silön and were then selected.

Q

The Kashag had the power to choose these delegates, right?

A

Yes.

Q

When the Tsondu Assembly was held, who had the responsibility?

A

The Trungtsi would say something like, "The Kashag said this, so what would be better regarding this?" Then [after] they would summarize what the Tsondu members said. The

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Trungtsi talked to each other and then they had to make a summary and submit that to the higher ups. The Trungtsi had to make this summary, but as for the power [answer not finished]

Q

There were no people from the [dzong](#) (districts) in the Tsondu, right?

A

Yes. But there were representatives from [Tashilhunpo](#) and Sakya and there were about 15 people from the Lhasa community who were the house owners. Then probably, there was one from Kündeling Labrang [tib. kun bde gling] and one from Tsomönling Labrang [tib. tshe smon gling] and one from Tsechogling Labrang [tib. tshe mchog gling]. And there was the representative of the Ganden Tri Rimpoche [tib. khri rin po che]. There was a custom whereby these people would come carrying their seals, but they would not talk much.

However, the Tsondu Assembly at this time was a very special and dangerous Tsondu. It summoned the people who had served the Dalai Lama like the [Jigyab khempo](#) and the Sösimchösum. These three were ones who had titles, so they asked them about this and they said, "We don't accompany the Dalai Lama all the time. The ones who accompanied the Dalai Lama all the time were the favorites (tib. Jense [spyang bsal]) like [Künphel](#) La. Then they [the Assembly] said that we should ask [Künphel](#) and then they sent people to arrest [Künphel](#).

Q

The Sösimchösum said that they do not know anything, right?

A

Yes. They said, "Our work was like opening the [using English] office and getting dressed up and standing there for show for about an hour while the Trungja [the monk officials' daily morning tea] was held." When the [using English] official work was done, [Künphel](#) La and those people do not need to come. During the Trungja, the favorites sort of had a holiday and they would watch from some corner, but then after the Trungja was over, they would come. Do you understand?

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Q

Was [Künphel](#) La a monk? From which monastery was he?

A

No, he wasn't a monk, but later he became a monk. He was a [miser](#) of Treshong [tib. bkraś gshongś] estate, Chönden's [tib. chos ldan] home [estate]. When they were talking about calling [Künphel](#) La, [Lungshar](#) told many people in the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment [answer not finished]

Q

When the Tsondu was held, would one of the Trungtsigye stand up and say, "Today we are going to hold the Tsondu on such and such a matter?"

A

They would not stand up. According to custom, all the members would be seated and then they would serve a tea and then they would bring some [tsamba](#) and everyone would eat [bag](#). There was no meat served. Then the senior [Trunyichemmo](#) would say, "The reason for holding this Tsondu is according to the order from the Kashag which said that [Sendregasum](#) has submitted a petition, so we have to discuss this matter. So now we will read the petition." And they read the petition and the contents were there. [Lungshar](#), however, didn't talk and stayed there as if he didn't know about that. Then some of Lungshar's people said, "This is ridiculous and very bad (tib. [gang](#) mintse dugjag [gang min tshad sdug cag]). We have to inquire about this because we are very sad that the Dalai Lama has passed away. So please let us inquire about this."

Q

Did they raise their hands?

A

No, they would not raise their hands. They just said that verbally. Only several people talked and though most of the people thought that this was not good, they kept quiet. After a while one of the Trungtsi said, "Now so and so "honorable misters" (tib. kushog [sku zhabs]) have said something, right? Wouldn't it be better to inquire into this [How the Dalai

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Lama died]? And then all said, "That is right! [using English] "yeah." And then some said, "Isn't that right?" And the people near them said, "That is right!" And then it was finished.

When they were going to arrest him 2-3 days later, they sent people to the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment and said that the so called [Drongdrag](#) Regiment was bullied (tib. wangyö dang [dbang yod btang] by [Künphel](#) La. This was on the 3rd day after they held the [tsongdu](#). At that time, [Künphel](#) La was not yet arrested and all the soldiers of the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment came to [Norbulinga](#).

Q

Did they come for [Künphel](#) La?

A

No, this was done by [Lungshar](#). He made the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment ineffective (tib. nüpa mepa [nus pa med pa]). The soldiers [came and] said, "Please allow us to go to our homes." And they [the government] couldn't stop them. Therefore, they submitted a petition to the Kashag.

Q

Was this before the Tsondu was held?

A

It was 1-2 days after the Tsondu. The [Drongdrag](#) Regiment soldiers came to the Kashag, not to the Tsondu.

Q

What did they say in the Tsondu for the 2 days?

A

First, they asked the [using English] officials who had the titles and had served the Dalai Lama, and then they left it like being lazy or sluggish. They were probably afraid that if they did something right away, [Künphel](#) La might use the soldiers and do something. When the [Drongdrag](#) soldiers came to the Kashag, they [the officials] were extremely scared and told them, "You soldiers go back and we will look at the matter that you have reported." So all people in the Tsondu thought that this was not good and they were afraid.

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At this time, the abbots of [Sendregasum](#) said, "This is very bad. These soldiers are in a desperate situation (tib. uthug ['u thug]) and [Künphel](#) La is bad. So there is a danger that the government's guns and the gold in the [Trapchi](#) Regimental Headquarters will be lost, so we are going to send [dobdo](#) from Sendre [Sera and Drepung] to guard [Trapchi](#)."

Q

Did they really mention Künphel's name?

A

They didn't mention [Künphel](#), but since the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment was created by [Künphel](#), if the monks got guns in their hands, [Lungshar](#) would get the [using English] power. But [Lungshar](#) always kept quiet. Then all the thoughtful people said, "This is not at all right [to send monks]. At that time, the one who said that most strongly was [Dombor](#) [tib. gdong por]. If [Dombor](#) said something, everyone would follow him and repeat what he said.

Q

At that time what was [Dombor](#) ['s position]?

A

He was the 2nd or the 3rd [Trunyichemmo](#). At that time, when many people discussed what would be better, [Dombor](#) said that. And they [Dombor, etc] told [Sendregasum](#) not to send the monks, but [Sendregasum](#) said that they were going to send the monks tonight. There was nothing [to think about] for the monks. If they tell them to send 100 monks, they will come saying "yes" and they don't have any thoughts about it. Even if you tell 500 of them to come, they will come. [Dombor](#) said, "Do not send monks. Though the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment rebelled against the [Trapchi](#) Headquarters, there was a small regiment called something like Dathang [tib. da dang] and it was also called the "Soldiers of the Agriculture Department" [tib. Sonam Legung [so nam las khungs]) who didn't rebel. The Kashag had already given the order to the soldiers of the Sonam Legung that if reckless people like the monks come there, go ahead and shoot them. At that time, the Trungtsi told the Kashag that if the monks were given the power, they will do reckless things.

Q

Did the Trungtsi first discuss this and then report to the Kashag?

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A

Yes. When they discussed this, [Lungshar](#) would not say anything.

Q

Did some of the Tsondu members stand up and say that?

A

They didn't stand up, they said that while being seated.

Q

What did the Trungtsigye say?

A

The Trungtsigye said, "First we will discuss this and then we will report it to the Kashag." Then the Trungtsi went through the motions of going to the Kashag. When the Kashag discussed it, the Kalöns didn't have any ideas, but when the Trungtsi said that it was not good to send the monks, the Kashag said, "That's right. If they send monks, it will be very dangerous." So on that night, they sent people to the [Trapchi](#) office and collected all the bolts of the rifles. It would be dangerous to bring several thousands of rifles, so they collected just the bolts that night. If we didn't take the bolts, there were about a thousand [Drongdrag](#) soldiers and there were also many other guns. If we bring the bolts, there will not be many loads. Probably, there were about 100 loads and they put them in the Potala. So when the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment soldiers went back, there were no bolts for their rifles.

Q

Did the monks of [Sendregasum](#) come?

A

No, they didn't. There were about 300 soldiers [in Trapchi] who had guns and they were given the order that they were not allowed to leave the regiment and that whoever comes just shoot them. Then the Trungtsi came back and said, "Now we have reported and discussed with the Sawangs [Kalöns] and they also said that no monks are allowed to be sent to [Trapchi](#). Monks are for practicing religion and it is not good for them to carry

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guns. Tonight we will collect the bolts of the rifles. There is no danger there because the 300 soldiers will guard that place so do not send any monks. If some monks go there recklessly, they [the soldiers] will shoot them." So they could not send the monks and this was the first time when the power of [Lungshar](#) decreased [tib. chag].

However, although the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment had already rebelled, the Gusung [Bodyguard] Regiment was still there and its Rupön was Lungshar's son. The Gusung Depön was Jangra [tib. lcang ra] and he was very close to Kujar. However, Jangra was also a steady person who was related to [Bönshö](#) [tib. bon shod], but he was afraid of getting arrested because it was easy to arrest him, so he kept quiet and the power [in the regiment] was controlled by the Rupön. On the day after the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment rebelled, they sent people to arrest Kujar [Künphel La] when he was in [Norbulinga](#). [Among the people who went to arrest Kujar], there were 2-3 government officials and the most trustworthy of these was Lungshar's son. When Kujar was in his house, [answer not finished]

Q

Did the Kashag send those people?

A

They didn't tell the Kashag. The Tsondu sent those people. They called Kujar and when he was coming down a little bit, Kujar said, "Oh! If I have to go to the Tsondu, I have a gun in my robe because the situation is not that not good these days. So I will leave the gun." So the Rupön took the gun. When they arrived at the Tsondu, the Rupön said to the Tsondu, "Künphel had a gun in his robe and I grabbed it." (tib. trog ['phrog]). Then there was another Monk official who was among the people who went to arrest Kujar and he said, "Kusho! That is not true. Kujar said, "If I have to come to the Tsondu, I am going to leave my gun." And Kujar didn't try to take out the gun." This made the Rupön, Lungshar's son, feel ashamed among the Tsondu members.

Q

Who said that?

A

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He was the monk official named Lobsang Nyendrag [tib. blo bzang snyan grags] who lived in [Shöl](#). He was a nice person and he told the truth and everyone liked him, but it didn't help. The monks said, "It is very bad that the Dalai Lama has died. It is terrible" [interview interrupted by a child talking]. One of the pro-Lungshar people was an old Kudrak called Yülha [tib. yul lha ba] who had done a lot when he was the Magji and later he got whipped during the [Khyungram](#) [tib khyung ram] incident [He was also known as Gajang Demba (tib. mgar byang bstan pa)]. He said, "Nowadays, if someone [using English] murdered a man, you would whip him and put a cangue on him, so how could it be okay if you don't give legal punishment to the man who killed the Dalai Lama?"

This was answered by [Lukhangwa](#) who was then the Lhasa Nyertsang [tib. gnyer tshang] [sort of mayor]. He said, "Gusho! Until today, we, the Tibetan people, didn't know that the Dalai Lama was killed. We just heard that the Dalai Lama passed away and now you are saying that the Dalai Lama was killed. How was he killed? You must prove it." Then all the people liked this and kind of laughed a little bit, so he became slightly deflated (tib. poba shum [tib. spobs pa zhum]).

Q

What was the Lukhangwa's [position]?

A

He was a fifth rank official holding the position of Lhasa Nyertsang. But this also didn't help, and [Künphel](#) La was arrested and sent walking with an escort of soldiers to the Potala Palace that night. When he arrived at Potala Palace there were about 20 Gusung soldiers to guard him and 20 [dobdo](#) from [Sendregasum](#). He was shut up in the prison called [Sharchenjog](#). The next day they sealed the houses of Kujar and arrested Kujar's father and relatives as well as the rich trader called Gegen Lamey [tib. dge rgan bla med].

When they arrested these people, everyone was saying that [Pandatsang](#) would also be arrested because he was close to Kujar. But they didn't arrest him. At the Tsondu Assembly there were some bad people who said that we should arrest [Pandatsang](#). However, the representatives of Sera were close to [Pandatsang](#) so they said, "It is very dangerous to arrest [Pandatsang](#) because he has a lot of trading capital from [Sendregasum](#) in his hands, and if you arrest him, most of his money is in India so what is the use of sealing his house and arresting one person. So we, [Sendregasum](#), would like to ask you not to do that. Therefore they couldn't seal his [Pandatsang's] house. However,

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since there was the talk that something might happen to [Pandatsang](#), this talk reached Kham. At the time of Kujar's power, Kujar had appointed one of the sons of [Pandatsang](#) as a Rupön in Kham with 700 soldiers under him. So he [Pandatsang Rupön] rebelled against [the government].

Q

Had he been appointed as a government official (tib. Shungshab [gzhung zhabs])?

A

He was the younger brother of [Pandatsang](#) and had been specially appointed as a Shungshab by the Dalai Lama. About two years had passed since then.

Q

At that time was the [Pandatsang](#) brother in Lhasa a Shungshab?

A

He was not yet. But the son was appointed as a Rupön and the soldiers under him were all Khambas. They made a new unit with 700 soldiers. The Rupön had the highest power [in the unit] and he was very powerful. He was thinking of making a united Kham and setting up an all-Khamba government.

Q

How did he [Rupön] hear about that [Kujar]?

A

I think [Pandatsang](#) probably sent a letter [to him] saying that we are in a very dangerous situation. Then he rebelled. Later, I will talk about the rebellion. After they locked up [Künphel](#) La and arrested his followers, they said that we are going to move the Tsondu to the Potala Palace.

Q

Why?

A

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Because it was better for the interrogation as it was nearer to where [Künphel](#) [was incarcerated]. There was a person called Tashi Thöndrub [tib. bkra shis don grub] who was close to [Künphel](#) and also served the Dalai Lama. He was locked up in the [Shöl](#) Legung and his legs were shackled.

Q

They didn't investigate whether there was proof or not, right?

A

Yes. The doctor who gave medicine to the Dalai Lama was also arrested and locked up in prison. The Tsondu made a plan. Some said that they will shackle and put a cangue on [Künphel](#). They said a lot of things like this, but some others said, "It is not okay to do that because he served the Dalai Lama a lot. Later the government confiscated his wealth and it was decided to exile him to Kongpo and hand him over to Demo [tib. de mo] Monastery. He was to stay there as a monk. At that time, they also fined the [Jigyab khempo](#) and the Sösimchösum, and they demoted the [Nechung](#) [tib. gnas chung] Oracle who gave the medicine to the Dalai Lama just before he died.

Q

They didn't have any proof, right?

A

Yes, but [Lungshar](#) and [Sendregasum](#) were powerful. One day, when they spoke a lot about whipping and killing [Künphel](#), [Lukhangwa](#) and [Dombor](#) and many other people said, "It is not okay to do that. He served the Dalai Lama a lot so it is not good to do that." The next morning, on the way to go to the Tsondu, a poster was stuck up in which it was written, "Pro-Künphel people who had [using English] sympathy for [Künphel](#) gave a lot of gold to [Lukhangwa](#) and [Dombor](#)." They were just telling a lie to make the two of them keep quiet in the Tsondu. They hoped that the two of them would not talk much at the Tsondu. The poster was stuck up by the Pro-Lungshar people.

Q

What else did they write in the poster?

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A

They wrote things like, "Künphel La is very bad and killed the Dalai Lama, etc. Because [Lukhangwa](#) and [Dombor](#) took (ate) (tib. se [bzas]) a lot of gold as a bribe from the Pro-Künphel people, they are still backing and helping that horrible person. Isn't this strange?" But people like [Dombor](#) were still [using English] strong and said, "I heard that they have stuck up a poster, but I am still going to speak because I have to tell the truth." Anyway, they were unable to whip [Künphel](#) La. Then they reported to the Kashag, and the Tsondu made a plan where, in accordance with custom, at the bottom of the plan, they wrote, "Is this petition okay or not" (tib. thümin nyanshu ['thus min snyan zhu]). If it was okay, they would put a red dot using red ink on the word "okay" ['thus]. The Kashag didn't dare to make changes in the plan and submitted it [unchanged] to the Silön. The Silön was relaxed because he didn't have a problem with it as it was written only about [Künphel](#) La, so he put the red dot quickly on the word "okay" at the bottom of the plan, and above the plan he wrote the year, month and the date. Actually, the Silön had the power to make changes in the plan.

Q

What did they write in the plan?

A

In the plan, they didn't write that the Dalai Lama was killed, but wrote, "It doesn't sound good at all when [we] look at it his actions, he deserves to be punished severely." They were saying it as if he had to be [using English] hanged, but since the Dalai Lama died recently, it said we feel pity on him and will just confiscate his wealth and prohibit him from coming to Lhasa. He will be handed over to Kongpo and he will have to stay there permanently.

Q

How did they settle this in the Tsondu? Did each person say their suggestions?

A

No. When the Pro-Lungshar people like the monks said that he [Künphel La] must be send to such and such a place, supposing if I am in the Tsondu, if I said this is not okay,

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then I would be arrested the next day using another pretext. So I would keep quiet. So like this everyone kept quiet. If the Pro-Lungshar people said, "Now the Tsondu is saying that [Künphel](#) La must be send to Kongpo, isn't this good?" Then everyone would say "[We] agree with this. This was like saying [using English] "okay." Then the [Trunyichemmo](#) would say, "Now, this is done, right? How about writing the plan? (tib. tha di drigsongnga/ yigi bris na [da 'di 'grigs song nga/ yi ge bris na]).

Q

There wasn't any voting, right?

A

Yes. They just wrote the plan and read it and then they said, "Now, is this right?" There was nobody making it better by saying make it [the punishment] a little bit smaller and just give him half of his wealth, etc. When somebody said some bad things like we must add something more [on the punishment] and [we must be] careful that he will not run away, then they would add 1-2 words to the plan. [laughs]. Then they asked, "Now, is this right?" And then all people said, "[We] agree to this." So then they make a clean copy [of the plan] and submitted it to the Kashag. It was as if as the Tsondu had made the decision.

Q

When did they do that?

A

Künphel La was arrested on the 19th of the 11th lunar month and the Dalai Lama passed away on the 30th of the 10th lunar month. On the 4th of the 11th lunar month, [Künphel](#) La acted kind of show-offish (tib. trog trog [krog krog]) and had the army regiment do marching (tib. rudig [ru sgrig]). Then on the 5th, 6th, and the 7th, there was a lot of talk and things were kind of disorganized (tib. ari uri ['a ri 'u ri]). Probably on the 16th or 17th, the representatives of [Sendregasum](#) came to the Kashag and then the Tsondu was convened. [Künphel](#) La was sent down [to Kongpo] on the 29th of the 12th lunar month. That was the day of the big [using English] religious ceremony called Gutor [tib. dgu gtor] where they perform Cham in the Potala. Many people would come to watch the dance as well as representatives of the British and the Gorkha Captain [tib. gor kha dpon po]. They also would do the big exorcism (tib. [torgya](#) [gtor rgyag]). So on that day, [Künphel](#) La was taken

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down through Lhasa just before they did the exorcism where they burned the [torma](#) and shot guns after that.

It was strange that the 20 monks guarding [Künphel](#) La liked him. When [Künphel](#) La was sent down, he didn't have a servant, but one of the monk guards who was a [dobdo](#) said that he will go with [Künphel](#) La to Kongpo as his servant. He went and stayed in Kongpo all the time, and when [Künphel](#) La fled to India, he went with him and stayed many years in Kalimpong in India. When the disturbance (tib. [singja](#) [zing cha]) took place he was still [Künphel](#) La's servant.

Q

Who was the person who fled with [Künphel](#) La?

A

That was Janglocen Gung [tib. lcang lo can gung].

Q

Was Janglocen Gung sent to Kongpo at that time?

A

No. He was not in [Künphel](#) La's [using English] party. He was in Lungshar's party.

Q

Did they hold the Tsondu for 4 days?

A

They held it for more than 4 days. [Künphel](#) La was arrested on the 19th and the Tsondu was meeting on the 20th, 21st and 22nd in the 11th month and was even held in the 12th lunar month.

Q

What were they doing in the Tsondu at that time?

A

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Mainly, they were selling the things that they had confiscated from many households. There was a very rich household called Nyerchung Ngawang [tib. gnyer chung ngag dbang] who was a head clerk of the [Shöl](#) legung. [Künphel](#) La's daughter was married into this household. All of his wealth was confiscated. [Künphel](#) La's wealth in Lhasa and his home in Nyemo [tib. snye mo] were all confiscated. So the Tsondu divided these and sent good people like 1-2 representatives of [Sendregasum](#) and some other people to sell those things. I was among the ones who sold the things of Nyerchung Ngawang. There also was [Trunyichemmo](#) Dombor, Jangra Gusung Depön and the famous Sera Chamön, and there was also Talama [tib. ta la ma] who is now in Dharamsala who was an ordinary monk official then. There were about 7-8 people who made the list of each thing with their price and sold them.

Q

To whom did you sell them?

A

We sold them to the people who came from everywhere.

Q

What did you do with the money?

A

We gave it to the government. [laughs] I was just sent there, but I didn't have any power. The people like Chamön had the big power. At that time, the Tsondu was engrossed (tib. gokhor [mgo 'khor]) in the [using English] economy. Usually the monks didn't have any work and when they came to have power, people were doing whatever they said. They held the Tsondu for 1-2 days and discussed matters such as banishing [Künphel](#) La. After [Künphel](#) La was sent down, the Tsondu discussed the matter of appointing the regent of Tibet.

Q

When would they start the Tsondu in the morning?

A

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They would start at around 9 am. and hold it until 5 pm. And sometimes it was held until 6 pm.

Q

Would all the people stay from the morning till evening or would some go out?

A

The Tsondu members had to stay there. At that time, they didn't hold the Tsondu gyendzom every time. They held the [tsondu](#) gyendzom in [Norbulinga](#) and then when they said that they were going to move to [Tse](#) [Potala], then they said it was the Tsondu hragdu (Abbreviated Assembly). The so-called hragdu was done only with government officials, but all the representatives of [Sendregasum](#) were still there. All the ones who had the power were there. Before that, I was in the hragdu and Shasur [tib. bshad zur] was also in the hragdu. In the hragdu there were only 20-30 government officials. There was nobody among us who was saying anything in the Tsondu.

Q

When they confiscated Kujar's wealth and sent him to Kongpo, who else suffered losses at that time?

A

There was a trader called Gegen Lamey who was close to [Künphel](#) La. He was imprisoned in [Nangtsesha](#).

Q

What was the reason?

A

Because he was a friend of [Künphel](#) La they said the he was a bad man and locked him up, but there was no reason. When he was arrested, there were two gold biscuits in his robe's pocket (amdra), which was like 50 tola. They took it, but since he was innocent [using English] politically, later he was released. The reason for releasing him was because he was very friendly with Drepung [Loseling](#) [tib. blo gsal gling]. He was kind of a patron of [Loseling](#) and he was doing a lot for them all the time, so the monks of [Loseling](#)

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might have said that Gegen Lamey didn't do anything. The one who suffered the loss was Nyerchung Ngawang who was a head clerk in the [Shöl](#) legung. [Künphel](#) La's daughter was married into his household. He was kind of a half [kudrak](#) and had the title called [trungtog](#) [tib. drung gtogs] which was like a lay official. Among the clerks in the [Shöl](#) legung, there were three who had more power and were called Nyerchung. He was rich and had a house and all of his [using English] property was confiscated. As a result, he died right there from depression (tib. lung [rlung]) [using English] and a heart attack.

Q

What did they do to the [Nechung](#) oracle?

A

He was only demoted. They didn't confiscate his wealth. However, there was a servant of the [Nechung](#) oracle who gave the medicine to the oracle, so he was whipped and banished to Lhoka. And they whipped the Dalai Lama 's doctor and sent him to a district. He was not that rich. After they demoted the [Nechung](#) oracle, they had to find a new oracle.

Q

Later, who became the oracle?

A

Thambag Simkhang Namgyal La [tib. dan 'bag gzim khang rnam rgyal lags], who was a monk official, became the new oracle. Some said that before that he was going into trance with [Nechung](#) a little bit.

Q

The [Nechung](#) oracle didn't lose his wealth, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Were there other officials who lost their wealth?

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A

No. That was because they let them do whatever they wanted to [Künphel](#) La and kept quiet. Then [Lungshar](#) became powerful.

Q

I saw in some books that before that [Lungshar](#) was trying to make a new system and was doing something like that. Is that true?

A

That was 3 months after that. When Lungshar's previous [using English] plans worked out, he became very ostentatious (tib. tamdö tsapo [gtam 'dod tsha po]) and thought that whatever he did would be alright. He acted arrogantly (tib. trog trog che [krog krog byas]).

Q

At that time, did the Silön and those people think that now we will have some big trouble in setting up a new government?

A

No, they didn't think like that. [Lungshar](#) was thinking about the early times, during the previous Reting regent's time, probably in [using English] the 18th century [sic. 19th] when Ganden and Drepung and some officials jointly took over the power for 10 years. It was called Gandre Trungji [tib. dga' 'bras drung spyi]. [Lungshar](#) thought that there will be a [using English] copy of that at this time. He thought that I don't need to be a [Kalön](#). I can do whatever I want if I keep the Tsondu's [using English] power. That will be okay.

Q

You mean like a regent?

A

Yes. At that time when he wrote something in the Tsondu and submitted it to the Kashag and the Regent, nobody dared to say anything. They and just said [using English] okay.

Q

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Were the letters of [Künphel](#) La searched at this time?

A

They were not yet searched because he had many things and the letters were also at his home. At that time, they didn't know that. At that time, [Lungshar](#) was in [Künphel](#) La's biggest house where they were selling many things. What I said yesterday was wrong. In [Künphel](#) La's house in [Norbulinga](#) there were [Rampa](#) and the bearded Tsipön Trogao [tib. khro dga' bo]. The monk official was Trekhang [tib. bkraś khang] [Tseja](#). He later became the [Kalön](#) lama. There were also several representatives of [Sendregasum](#) who were nice people and had a little power. They were selling the things. It was after the New Year. At that time, the Tsondu had all the power and they were saying that Tibet needed a new regent. They reported this to the Kashag and discussed it with them and then they did the [senriy](#) divination with the names of three lamas.

Q

At that time, was that the Tsondu hragdu?

A

Yes.

Q

At the Tsondu hragdu, in the morning, would the [Trunyichemmo](#) say, "now, we need a regent?"

A

No, he would not say that. When they were going to hold the Tsondu, that morning the Trungtsi would go to the Kashag and they would report that there is a Tsondu today and we have already done the work on [Künphel](#) La. Since the Tsondu didn't have a seal, they would use the Kashag's seal for the documents like banishing [Künphel](#) La, etc. Then the Trungtsi would tell the Kashag, "There is talk regarding appointing a regent. How about that?" Then the Kashag would tell the Trungtsi, "For that we need a lama, so the Tsondu should discuss which lama is appropriate."

Q

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Wouldn't the Kashag mention the names of the lamas?

A

They wouldn't. Then the Tsondu discussed this and mentioned the names of the following lamas: the [Ganden Tripa](#) Amey [tib. a mes], Phurbujog [tib. phur bu lcog], and among the Huthogthu, Reting was the eldest. They said that these three lamas are good.

Q

Who mentioned those names?

A

In the Tsondu everyone kind of mentioned their names.

Q

It is very hard to understand this.

A

In the [Tsondu's] sub-groups (tib. tsogchung [tshogs chung]) each of which included about 10 people, you and I might say who there are among the lamas who are better?

Q

Where there sub-groups?

A

No. There were no real sub-groups, but people sitting near to each other would say things like "There is the [Ganden Tripa](#), right?" And some would say he is good. And then who else are there? And some would say, "Phurbujog might be good because he was the tutor (yongdzin) of the former Dalai Lama." And then the others would say, "Yes, he is good."

Q

The Trungtsi would not mention the names, right?

A

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Yes. They would ask the Tsondu members who would be better and then the members discussed this and mentioned three names.

Q

Did the Tsondu members have to write a note saying Phurbujog would be better?

A

No. They just said all sort of things verbally. I didn't hear this, but I think the Kashag had told them like this, "Among the high lamas there is the [Ganden Tripa](#), and there is also the famous Phurbujog Lama who was the tutor (yongdzin) of the former Dalai Lama, and who is the eldest among the different Huthogthu level Lamas?

Q

They said this to the Trungtsigye?

A

Yes. And then the Trungtsigye would say, "Now, according to the order from the Kashag and the Silön, since we need a higher lamas, the [Ganden Tripa](#) and Phurbujog, who was the yongdzin of the former Dalai Lama, and also there is the eldest among the Huthogthu, so you must discuss this [a lama as Regent]" Then all people would say yes. Since one person mentioned these names, there would be nobody who would say no.

Q

Were the names of the [Ganden Tripa](#) and Phurbujog mentioned by the Kashag?

A

Normally, according to the custom in the early times, the [Ganden Tripa](#) would be mentioned every time when appointing a regents. And Reting, being a Huthogthu [was one]. This made three names] and according to Tibetan custom, they would make it an odd-number such as 3-5-7 and not an even number like 2 or 4. So some said that this is good and did not add more people to the three. And some other said, aren't there other people, and some said no. Then they wrote the names of the above mentioned lamas and submitted it to the Kashag. The Kashag would also say that they think this is good

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and they asked the Silön, and he said that what the [tsondu](#) said is good. So we will do the [senriy](#) lottery divination with these [three] names.

Q

Did this take like one day?

A

This took like 2-3 days.

Q

If it took 3 days, there must have been a lot of talk?

A

Some might have said, "Who else is there? And since this is important, we all should leave it for today and go home. At that time, [Lungshar](#) thought that whoever was appointed as the regent it didn't make any difference to him because he had to go along with the wishes (tib. döpatre ['dod pa sprad]) of the monks that they need a lama [as the regent] and the military power is his hands as his son was the Rupön. The important monks in the monastery were on his side. Like this, he thought he will have the power and he acted arrogantly, so [Lungshar](#) didn't go against the matter of appointing the regent and he also said this is good.

Q

Did the [Drongdrag](#) Magar Regiment's soldiers stay there or did they return?

A

The Kashag fined the Depöns, Rupöns and Gyagpöns of the [Drongdrag](#) Magar Regiment with money. The two Depöns were fined 50 gold coins each, and the Rupöns were fined something like 15 gold coins, and the Gyagpöns were fined 10 gold coins while the Shengos were fined 1 gold coin. There were a little over 1,000 soldiers in the regiment and 200 were told to stay for 6 months, but the rest were sent home although they had to come to Lhasa to practice military drills once every 6 months in rotation. This was decided by the Kashag. Regarding this, they [the Tsondu] didn't say anything.

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Q

What did they accuse the [Drongdrag](#) Magar Regiment of doing?

A

They said, "You should have written a petition according to our custom and it was wrong that many of you came [to Norbulinga]. The Kashag told the [Drongdrag](#) Magar, "it will be hard for you to stay here, so only 200 soldiers will remain. They did the 6 months rotation for 1 year, but then the Kashag stopped doing the rotation saying that this is useless. [laughter].

This was done by [Lungshar](#). [Lungshar](#) knew some important and knowledgeable people in Shigatse [in the [Drongdrag](#) Magar] and he taught them [what to do] so they [a few of the soldiers] said, "Now is the time to go." They were all from rich families and they just rushed to [Norbulinga] and most of the soldiers followed them, even though they didn't know what was going on. They got what they wanted and they didn't have to stay in Lhasa.

Q

The Kashag's new plan for leaving 200 soldiers was not related to [Lungshar](#), right?

A

Yes. The Kashag asked the Tsondu hragdu. At that time, I wrote the document.[laughter], I remember clearly that it was the day they arrested [Künphel](#) La. That's why I didn't see them arresting [Künphel](#) La. I went to another room to write in secret.

Q

Did the [tsondu](#) tell you to write this and that?

A

The Trungtsigye had already written [a draft] so I wrote the clean copy like a [using English] secretary typing it. Right after that, they submitted it to the Silön. He didn't have any power and didn't make any changes, though he could have changed 200 into 300 and 6 months into 1 year. But he didn't dare to make changes and all the Kashag members knew it, so the Silön just put the red dot and the year, month and the date on it. [laughter]

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Q

There was no hope for the Silön to become the regent?

A

No. He didn't have the [using English] the power and party behind him. The party in Tibet was not the same as the parties here [in America] because all people didn't have knowledge (tib. yönten [yon tan]) and the majority could be led wherever you wanted to lead them. The [using English] power was in the hands of the monks who had gathered together. They didn't have much ability to think about issues so if somebody from above said something, they would follow them and right away do reckless things (tib. gangchung mangchung [gang byung mang byung]). Therefore, they sent back the [Drongdrag](#) Magar and send [Künphel](#) La down [to exile].

Then they did the [senriy](#) lottery divination with three names of the lamas in front of the statue of Avaloketisvara [tib. 'phags pa rin po che] in the Potala where the Kashag, Trungtsi and Silön watched it together with representatives of the Tsondu. The one who rolled the [senriy](#) was the ex-Ganden Tripa Champa Chödra [tib. byams pa chos grags]. He was a very old and [English] famous lama. He was like a pope, and when he rolled the [senriy](#) balls and one popped out he opened it. It said Reting so all said [using English] congratulations (tib. Tashi Deleg [tib. bkra shis bde legs]). And then they sent the letter to Reting saying that you are the regent of Tibet, so please come here. At that time, he was in the north [at his monastery]

Q

It was just luck (tib. lamdro [lam 'gro]), right?

A

It was not luck. Poor thing! (tib. nyala [dmyal ba]). He didn't even know that if we hadn't done that, there would not have been any damage to the Reting Labrang. They were very rich at that time. After doing that [the regency], he experienced a lot of suffering like being imprisoned and had to die and lose much of his wealth. Actually, this was not his good luck it was bad for him.

Q

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Didn't [Künphel](#) La have friends in the monastery?

A

The [Sera Je](#) [College] was helping him, but at that time, Drepung and Ganden and the [Sera Mey](#) College didn't like [Sera Je](#) because [Sera Je](#) was small. So [Sera Je](#) didn't dare to do much. Some of [Künphel](#) La's trustworthy people in Lhasa wrote a letter to him saying, "You shouldn't do like this. You can do something in one day if you use your strength right now." But [Künphel](#) La said, "I don't need to do this and I am not going to do it because the country will be in chaos (tib. sa ngi si ngi [zang gi zing ngi])"

Q

That was wrong, right?

A

Yes, but perhaps he would have died [if he had done that]. It is not certain. He received the letter [on a [samtra](#) writing slate] just before he was arrested. He didn't write an answer and erased the letter and gave it back. Among the people who wrote this letter, there was [Pandatsang](#) because in Lhasa there were many traders who had many guns and lot of wealth and cash. [the rest of the tape was blank]